


CTA, Metra, Amtrak fare well in budget deal

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Politics



Despite [threats that the Trump administration would take a budget ax](#) to Chicago transportation programs, the region appears to have fared pretty darned well in the first federal financial showdown of the Trump era.

According to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the [omnibus fiscal 2017 funding bill](#), agreed to by congressional leaders and the president, contains none of the cuts the new president outlined in his proposed fiscal 2018 budget and, in fact, pretty much agrees to outlines bargained for by both parties during the Obama presidency.

That's not necessarily a promise of things to come.

But the Trump folks who agreed to this plan to avoid a government shutdown probably won't want one when the new fiscal year begins on Oct. 1, either, so a pattern may have been set.

Among items in the measure, which awaits a final vote, are \$100 million for the Chicago Transit Authority's Red Line North modernization plan, the first piece of a \$1.1 billion funding deal reached in the final days of the Obama administration. The deal likely was legally binding. But you never know for sure these days, and now the first payment is being appropriated.

Also in the funding bill, according to CMAP, is \$500 million nationally in Tiger grants that could fund the CTA or portions of the Create freight-rail decongestion program, and \$199 million for new generation passenger-train controls that prevent accidents. Metra is expected to apply for a chunk of that.

There are no cuts in Amtrak operations. Trump had talked about eliminating all long-distance trains outside of the Northeast Corridor, a move that would have whacked Chicago-based train service. And overall, routine "formula" appropriations for roads and transit are in the amounts that the past Congress enacted as part of a five-year funding package, according to CMAP.

Overall, not too bad, fellow commuters.

But let's see what happens next.

Update, 3:45 p.m.— The office of Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., is confirming the funding win. They are particularly pleased at the new money for the core-capacity program, the source of that promised \$1.1 billion for the first phase of the Red Line north work and, potentially, future phases, too.